



There was, once upon a time, a little Prince, who lived a confined life in the King and Queen's castle. Most of his days were spent playing with trinkets, or finding some useful way to entertain himself. As the Prince grew in stature, he found growing within him a desire to rule his Papa's Kingdom. His father laughed at this, and only ever said 'In time my little Prince'. So, the Prince tried to do all the things he thought befit a King – hunt for deer and rabbits, wield a sword, study scrolls and maps, give arousing speeches and so forth. One day the young Prince got the bright idea that to have the Kingdom he must have a Queen. "If I can just find the right Princess" thought the young Prince, "then my Papa must give me the Kingdom." And so, his search began.

The shifty Prince thought he could woo a Princess by showing her his father's Kingdom, when in reality, all that he had of his own were a few trinkets and many fantasies. The young Prince then sent out invitations to all the surrounding kingdoms, realms and commonwealths, asking that the rulers send their daughters to a great dance. Along with the invitation the haughty Prince sent a portrait of himself and a map of his Papa's realm. Preparations were made, cakes were baked, carpets were rolled out, and the Prince hired a tailor to fit a suit just for him. The King grinned as he watched the young Prince fester anxiously about, but the Queen found herself a bit dismayed and reluctant, after all, this was her only son, her baby, the apple of her eye, and several other designations the son was no longer fond of.

The day came and no one showed. Well, almost no one. Late to the party came a young Princess from a far off and small region. She was reluctant to go, but at her father's urging she went. Before she left home her King Papa gave her a mirror rimmed with pearls, which she quickly tucked away at the bottom of her luggage, for since she was a small child she found that with all mirrors her reflection was only a hazy and distorted outline, as if she were looking at herself in a spoon.

As the shy Princess walked into the grand ballroom with all its trappings of luxury and power, the Young Prince was smitten. His thoughts, too powerful to be contained in his own mind, formed words that spoke aloud "At last, my Princess!" The shy Princess looked in his eyes and thought something closer to "Well, why not. If marriage is my lot, why not him, he seems nice enough." Before she travelled home, the Prince gave the Princess a silver necklace holding an opal, which he had stolen from the Queens jewelry box. And so, in due time, they were married.

They lived happily ever after their wedding day to the end of their honeymoon, which was precisely when things started getting a bit tricky and discouraging.

One day, after hearing his Papa reply once again, "In time my Little Prince", the frustrated Prince screamed out at their four walls, "What else is there to it? I have done everything, why am I still nothing more than his Little Prince!" As his thoughts stewed and churned, he began to believe that if he had married a different princess, someone from a more powerful family, then maybe then he would have been given the Kingdom. From that day forward his words were distant and his touch cold towards his confused wife. She took this to mean that she had done something wrong, and so she tried harder – laughing at his unfunny jokes, smiling at his misguided ideas, and trying to present more affection in the midst of his brooding despair. Still, nothing seemed to thaw his frozen heart. The shy Princess retreated further into her hobbies while she watched the Prince wander afar in his schemes and fantasies.



As was his yearly custom, the Prince took a fishing trip into the Great Sea. In years past he had selected a few men to go with him to steer his ship, tie his lines, land his catch and paddle him home against strong current and wind. This time, however, the young Prince thought that this would be his best opportunity to prove he could rule his Papa's Kingdom, and so he loaded the boat, raised the sails, bid farewell to his wife and children and set out alone. The Princess had learned that remaining silent was easier with her brooding husband, and so, against the knots in her stomach, she relented and wished him luck.

At first, with the wind in his sails and his ship gliding across the emerald green waters, the young Prince felt alive and fresh; finally away from the confines of that house and those rules. He cast his hook and sat patiently in his favored fishing spot, but as is the custom of fish who are being pursued, no bites came that day, or that night, nor the next morning. The young Prince had never ventured beyond this spot, heeding the direction of his guides to never put out further than you can see land, but having no guides with him on this trip, he quickly formed his own opinion that their words were no more than foolish rules for scared and frightened men. He also quickly convinced himself that he was the young Prince for whom the Kingdom was waiting, so what could possibly go wrong? He pulled up the anchor, set the sails, and journeyed into the dark blue of the Great Sea.

After several hours, he found that he was too deep to anchor, and that he could not paddle while fishing, so he let the current push him out deeper while he launched his line. Dark green fish bit and flew into the boat. Larger fish than he had ever caught with his former 'old and stupid guides' as he now thought of them. "Who were they to keep me from this fishing? They probably knew I would catch grander fish and kept me in-land to keep me young and in check." As adrenaline tends to wash away time, before the young Prince realized it, he was in the middle of the dark sea with a black sky and no land in sight. "Oh well, I will just follow the sun back East in the morning," thought the naïve and foolish Prince.

The sun never rose. The Prince awoke at some time, in what seemed like the night, to water washing over the sides of his boat. He had never really been in a storm before, and in his panic, he decided to get busy and row, never minding that he was not sure which direction he should be going. To be doing something felt safer than to sit and wait, and so unbeknownst to the young Prince, he rowed himself right into the middle of a great squall, which rowed against him for three days straight. The storm teamed up with a powerful channel, and by the time the great tempest relented, the Young Prince found himself near a great southern shore. To the scared young Prince, nothing mattered now but his own safety, and with the last of his energy he rowed himself onto the foreign shoreline. He collapsed on the sand and cried the tears of a Little Prince.

While the Prince was being beaten down and pushed south by the great squall, the Princess found herself being pushed down by a different force, though equally as destructive. As a child, one day alone in the meadows, she had been approached by a strange woman cloaked in deep purple, who seemed equally terrifying and beautiful. This woman asked the happy Princess what was her name, to which the Princess replied with her true name. Most people know you are not to give away your true name to just anyone, but the trusting Princess knew no better. The elder woman then placed a curse on the young Princess, stealing her true name and replacing it with a shameful one, as well as distorting her sight of her self with a curse. From that day forward the sweet and trusting Princess became entirely distrustful



of others. She had read in fairy tales of how meeting a Prince would often cure such a curse, but as her years grew in marriage she felt that the Prince only seemed to fulfill it. The Princess chose in this moment to believe the curse, and she lived hollowed and in death for a time. The shy Princess became silent.

The Prince awoke in dark sand to the sounds of unfamiliar birds. He looked behind him and found that his boat had washed out to sea, along with his prized-catches. He turned and looked before him to see a thick forest of red-barked trees just beyond the sandy beach. With no other options, he started up at once, determined to get home and get safe. As he walked forward he found a break in the trees with what seemed a path. After some time of stumbling over roots and being struck by branches, the Prince found himself grumbling and cursing under his breath. 'Why did this happen to ME?' Many other grumbles were muttered, but none merit being recalled. Hours into this the Prince sat on a stump, determined to stay in place until someone came and found him. 'After all', the deluded Prince thought, 'it is their fault I am here in the first place, so it should be up to them to find me!' And with that, the Little Prince sat sullen and morose for many days.

Eventually, hunger and fear of crawling things prompted him to start walking again. In time, and through more branches and brambles, he found himself coming out of the forest onto another shoreline, although he could see across this one to the other side. He was at a wide lake which stretched miles in either direction, a lake as dark as the night sky and thick with the stench of sulfur. As he walked for a time he came upon a boat filled with many holes, a broken oar and a rusted bucket. Crossing the odorous lake required him to paddle then bail, paddle then bail, paddle some more and then bail. At times the fumes of the lake would overwhelm him, causing his eyes to cloud in darkness and his thoughts to be pierced with pain. The task was arduous and at many times he thought there was nothing more for it but to sink. Midway across the lake, and with the sun setting to his left, he began to notice the red eye-shine of ancient creatures floating on the surface of the lake. He began to row faster, forgetting to bail water, and as he crept up to the not-as-distant bank, the boat began to fill with water, come apart at the joints and then quickly splinter. The young Prince felt hopeless as the broken timbers shifted around him. He had to swim, either that or drown, and he wasn't fond of drowning. The black water seemed thick and stung his eyes, nostrils and throat. There was nothing easy to it, but at last he found himself on the distant shore, broken and blistered, starving and sore.

"There's no going backwards now" thought the fool-hardy Prince, and so, once again, he began walking north. With cloud-piercing mountains to his west and east, he figured the gap to his north would be his easiest road home, confirmed by his terror of heights. Walking was arduous, and as the blisters on his hands began to heal, the hot sun started to blister his face and the bottom of his naked feet. Cracks began to splinter the earth and the young Prince found he was famished, realizing he had not eaten since he left the comfort of his Papa's castle. In this barren wasteland he began to remember the goodness of his Papa's table, laden with red meat, lush vegetables and juicy fruit, but fantasy did not fill his belly, so he began searching for something to eat as he trudged along. The ungrateful Prince eventually came to an old stump in the ground, and found edible-enough insects digging at the roots. This was the first feast the young Prince had ever prepared for himself, and he had never tasted anything as satisfying as those termites, bark and sand. His stomach began to growl a little less. The



wasteland seemed to go on for years, always with tall mountains looming to his left and wastelands stretching eternally to his East.

After many days and even more nights, the young Prince found himself stumbling and shouting through a cracked voice and blurred eyes until he finally collapsed in a heap. When he looked up he saw an old crow sitting and staring at him from only a few feet. He lunged for it, but missed. The old crow seemed to hop just out of reach every time the hungry Prince went to grab it. Finally, he collapsed onto his face, his hands above his head, in a final surrender to death. He awoke to the not-so-gentle song of the old crow, and found in one hand a few blackberries and in the other hand several worms. The old, black crow gave him just enough nourishment to see him through. After countless days, the blistered and barren young Prince found himself staring at another dark forest, with ancient trees towering over foliage of thorns and thistles.

With the snow-peaked mountains looming to his west, the scared Prince found his first few steps northbound through this forest came easy, but the ease soon left. Things here were dark and ancient. For some time the old crow would fly a few trees ahead of the Prince and wait, but all at once, in the deepest and darkest part of the forest, the black crow disappeared with a caw into the dark canopy above. The young Prince felt alone more acutely than he had ever experienced, as if nothing else existed in this wood but himself. He journeyed forward on a path too dim and overgrown to be called a path by any civilized person. The scared Prince found himself reluctant with every step forward, but found his reluctance overcome by the fear of turning back. Day became night and night became a darker night. The canopy of this old wood was so thick that the young Prince began to forget what the sun looked like, and he even began to miss the blistering heat of the wasteland or the stench smell of the dark lake. Terror ensued. The childish Prince began to tear at his hair and beard, scream obscenities and run around in circles – this was it, he would die nothing more than a young Prince. This lasted for days, maybe weeks, until at last the Prince began to hear the voice of the old crow. The bird's ugly call sounded like beautiful music to the Prince, and he began to chase after it, hoping beyond hope that this was not just a part of his insanity. At times the old crow would go silent and the Prince would begin to fear, each time shouting out until the crow would start up again. Over time, and through much darkness, the young Prince found himself on the other side of the dark forest.

As he raced out of the tree line and into the meadow, the Prince was taken aback. The range of looming mountains stretched out before him carving a line east. His northern road home was blocked. He would have to traverse the mountain, with his 'safest', if terror could be called 'safe', route being a pass to the west. Old Crow continued as his guide, sometimes journeying out of sight, but always leading by sight or sound. At times the young Prince would have to close his eyes and trust the direction of Old Crow's voice, not daring to look down at the drop below him. Food was always found, as well as water and shelter. In time, the young Prince found he did not hesitate at the direction of the bird. He would simply walk, his mind continually being drawn back home. As he did so, he found the image of the Princess becoming more defined and enlightened. "Maybe I was wrong about her?" began to creep into his thinking. In time, and over boulders, crags, white snow and shale, the Prince found himself walking steadily downwards and towards the setting sun. The frost on his heart began to thaw and through tears he began to finally see the Princess in her truest form – radiant, powerful and invigorative. His mind began to turn from survival and comfort towards thoughts of love and embrace. The Prince did not know it, but his eyes began to fill with golden light rather than the dimness of his youth, his hair



streaked with silver, and the angry lines of his furrowed brow started to smooth. The Prince was no longer young.

The Princess, meanwhile, lay alone and in solitude, closing her bedroom curtains and forbidding anyone come in to visit her. The wicked woman's curse had seeped its way into the deepest recesses of the Princesses heart and mind, enveloping them in a thick bleakness. Occasionally, she would try to peak at herself in her father's mirror, but would quickly turn it over or stash it beneath her dresser. Then one day, in the midst of her cavernous room, the Princess began to hear the sound of singing. As she strained her ears, she realized this was no ordinary singing – like that of a person, choir, bird or cricket. This voice had the presence of magic about it. So, as those who find themselves imprisoned so often do, she turned her pillow over her head to drown out the noise, cursing it for its mystery. This went on for some days, until at last the silent Princess had had enough of it. She slowly raised herself out of bed. On the first day she followed the voice to the foot of her bed, but quickly returned to her pillow. This also went on for some days, with each day drawing her further and further from the isolation of her comforter – first to her door, then to the end of the hallway, down the stairs, to the kitchen window and finally to the cook's herb garden. On this day, as the Princess felt the mud seep in between her toes, she saw that the singing was coming from a great cluster of herbs in the far corner of her garden. She slowly bent down and peeped in among the leaves of basil, rosemary and thyme, but, she saw nothing. Day after day she followed the singing to the herb garden, and each day she saw nothing there. One day she met an old garden woman there, more earthy than beautiful, but safe, and she inquired about the singing. The old garden woman said nothing but bent down and plucked a handful of herbs and blooming flowers for the shy Princess. With a small "Thank you" and the feeling of a great weight dropped, the smiling Princess went back to her room, where she threw wide the curtains and flung open the windows letting in the fresh breeze.

As the Prince crossed over the last foothills of the great mountain, he found Old Crow turning southwest, towards a path running south of another forest. The Prince looked this way and that glimpsing what seemed to be a break in the trees, just north of where Crow was perched. The self-assured Prince began walking towards this break, ignoring the increasingly annoying and sharp sounds of Old Crow. The Prince pushed down the tug in the pit of his gut, and trudged onward, determined to push through this final stretch towards home. Daylight dimmed as the Prince came through the break in the trees, but he did not stop. He traipsed on, finding that the ground seemed to give way much more than the granite of the mountains or the hard dirt of a path. When daylight finally loomed again, the Prince found himself the middle of a bog, eaten up by flies and gnats. He scanned West, North and East, but it all looked the same- sparse grasses, muddy holes and shallow puddles wrapping in all directions. The Prince began to curse himself for journeying into this wasteland. "What a fool you are!" and other more explicit descriptions he uttered under his breath. However, he continued forward, determined to get out of this one way or another. Shortly after this resolve he found he was thigh deep in a thick, rust colored mud and on the verge of sinking further. The Prince swallowed hard, but found he could not move. More shouts and curses – mostly at the ground for being so soft, or the mud for being so thick, or the gnats for being so small. At last, the Prince turned to look back and found, sitting a few feet behind him, the old crow silently holding a small grey thread in his mouth. The Prince, trusting his old friend, took the thread and began to pull. With relative ease he came out of the mud and began walking, and so long as he followed the thread he stayed on somewhat solid land. After several days travel he came back



to where he had started, staring at Old Crow perched in a tree to the West. The Wiser Prince sighed, smiled and walked West, just south of the forest line.

After a few miles of travel Old Crow flew off, giving a final call to the Prince, who waived for just a moment before continuing onward. The Prince now knew gratitude. Staying south of the forest and walking in a Westward direction, the Prince soon found paths which were worn and wide. In time he saw a small town, to which he began to race. To the Prince, he was running to his people at long last! To his people, this was a wild man covered in mud and sores, unkempt hair and a pungent smell! People ducked for cover, lifted their hammers or shouted for him to stay away. The Prince, not being accustomed to rejection, was unsure of what to do and so kept walking. As he journeyed through the town center, trying to avoid the looks of disdain or skepticism, he came upon a last hostel, if a wobbly framed, three and a half-walled room could be called such. The Prince entered, finding other wild men sitting scattered about. After a moment, they began to introduce themselves, forlorn travelers on their way back to the great city, some coming in from great hunts, others from far away business. When asked who he was and where he came from, the Prince answered that he was “No one of great importance, with no great stories or travels to tell of,” hoping this would protect him from the shame of being a Prince so long lost in the wilderness. In time, and after drinks, bread and meats, the men decided to travel to the Great City together, inviting the Prince to come along with them – to which he outwardly obliged but inwardly rejoiced. Their journey North lasted many days, involved more such adventures, and in time had the Prince revealing the true source of his journey, though not yet his identity. The befriended Prince began to know laughter, story-telling, and how to journey alongside of others.

The Princess found herself smiling more with each new day. She visited the garden lady often and the two struck up an immense friendship. They talked of herbs and flowers, rain, sunshine and other such important things. One day, the Princess struck up the nerve and started to speak of the Prince. As she spoke her story, she found the garden lady wept. The more she spoke, the more she wept. In time there came to be a great pool at the very center of the garden, which eventually filled with all kinds of common garden creatures with the uncommon attribute of being turquoise. On another day, as the Princess went down to the garden, she saw a stranger standing there, terribly beautiful, and in her hand a vase full of dirty water. As the Princess approached she suddenly remembered, but it was too late, the wicked woman reminded her of her cursed name and threw the water across the garden and into the Princesses face. The putrid water burned and poisoned. The wounded Princess brushed her hands across her face to find that she was now covered with boils and burns. She turned to once again run to her room, but tripped over she knew not what and lay in the grass weeping. In time, she heard the sound of singing and turned to behold the old garden woman standing over her. As the garden lady's tears fell they splashed across the Princesses face, instantly providing a cool balm. The garden lady lifted the wounded Princess by the arm and brought her to the garden pool. She then bent down with her and gently washed the Princesses face. The garden lady then spoke the Princesses true name, and when the Princess bent down a second time to wash her face she found that the boils were gone and she saw her reflection clearly for the first time since the wicked woman's curse. The joyful Princess was now free.

One day, as travels do, the journey of the wild men came to an end. The Great City lay before them and the men rejoiced. As they came to the city gate, the guards recognized the Prince, calling him by his true



name. The Prince winced and expected his fellow travelers to look at him with sneers or insults, but he found instead that they looked upon him with knowing smiles and locked eyes. No one was really that surprised as it turned out. Word went forth in the city, reaching the castle doors before the Prince. The Prince, still arrogant and incomplete, rushed in to swoop up the Princess, in hopes to rescue her from the pain of his absence. He expected a parade or a welcoming party, but instead found empty halls and silent rooms. Where was the Princess? In great earnestness, the Prince raced throughout the castle, hoping beyond hope that she would still be there. Finally, he walked out of the castle in desperation, believing that she had left him for good, but without blame for doing so. In that moment he looked up at the sound of singing to find the Princess, but not as she was when he had left her, for she was now standing in her true form clothed in white, a mysteriously beautiful and powerful Princess. The Princess was no less shocked to look on this great man, who she had once known as a small and shriveling boy, standing before her with an untamed beard, battered hands and new lines around his eyes. As they considered one another they could see the change. They whispered one another's true names as they kissed.

At times the Prince would fall back to cursing himself, feeling no more than a child in a man's suit, to which the Princess would remind him and call him by his true name. And so it went, each calling each other out of darkness at times, each walking together into a greater light, strength and preserving power. They began to be known throughout the realm as those whose touch brought healing, laughter brought fullness, and stories brought wisdom.

One day, the elder King and Queen bid the Prince (no longer little or whiny) and Princess (no longer young or shy) come to the throne room. The King spoke "It is now your time", and they offered them a new kingdom, one across the sea, to which they would be wholly entrusted. They were renamed King and Queen, and they lived forever after.

Look for the book "Marriage Won't Fix It: A Bible-informed guide to greater intimacy through whole and holy living" in Fall 2017!

[Sign up](#) for the newsletter to get updates, discounts and a first-look.

